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RE-SOCIALIZATION UNDER THE INDUSTRIAL CHANGE

— SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON THE UNEMPLOYED COAL-MINE WORKERS — (I)

By

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This paper will present material dealing with the process of seeking work and adjusting to new situation by the unemployed coal-mine workers. From a social psychological point of view, this process is grasped as re-socialization of the people who are confronted by a drastic decline in industry. In Part I, with the problem and method, the conditions will be made clear under which coal-mine workers seek a new place of work. In Part II, in the next number, various cases found by a follow-up study are classified into some types. And the influence of the industrial change on socialization are considered.

PROBLEM AND METHOD

Background of the problem: As a result of a so called "energy evolution" from coal to oil, the coal-mining industry in Japan has been on a rapid decline since the nineteen fifties. We shall view this change, taking the case of Hokkaido Prefecture, a representative coal-mining area of Japan. For the past ten years about a hundred minor coal-mines were closed and consequently about forty thousand workers lost their job and went away from the mines. Summing up the main causes by which miner coal-mines were compelled to close down, first, the coal was mostly for fuel not for steel manufacture and therefore minor coal-mines have directly undergone the effect of energy evolution from solid to liquid fuel. Second, the policy of the government toward coal-mining industry, called "scrap and build", has hastened the closing down of minor coal-mines. Third, the younger workers left and got jobs in modernized city industries or in major coal-mines; this movement of the younger people resulted in a chronic shortage of backbone labor, an advanced aging of other workers and consequently the loss of efficiency.

Regarding these factors, we must seriously consider the movement of the younger workers; because in this movement we see the influence that industrial change has on life-space of the coal-mine workers. We shall view this point in the case of our subjects, the workers from the Haboro Colliery Company nestled in the

valley of a mountain in north Hokkaido. This company was closed in 1970. It was a medium-sized company, one of the collieries called "one mountain one company". Since the beginning of the mine in 1939, the main source of labor has been always surplus labor from the petty farms and fishing villages in the area. As more labor was needed, it was supplied by draftees from Korea under the occupation before the war, by the returnees from the coal-mining areas of Saghalien under the occupation, also returned soldiers, fishermen having a poor catch of herring and settlers of reclaimed poor land after the war. At the height of prosperity after the war, about 2,500 workers were employed and then a coal-mining community with a population of 10,000 people was made up in the fold of mountains.

However, coal-mining industry has fallen into rapid decay since the bigining of nineteen sixties, contrasted with the increasing prosperity of city industries and their demand for more labor. This change at first brought about the mobility of the youth to the city immediately after graduation. Increasing demand of city industries for labor extended life-space of the younger workers and altered the importance and meaning of the coal-mine in their life-space. In due course of time, the younger workers were hired not only by city industries but also by major coal-mines that were troubled with a labor shortage. The minor coal-mines such as the Haboro Colliery Company were confronted with such unstable labor that they absorbed the workers from small coal-mines which had closed down. In the process of being hired elsewhere and absorbing, the age of worker has increased; the average age of subjects of our research was over forty when the mine was closed and two-thirds of all of the workers were between thirty five and fifty.

Framework of approach : The individuals who are discharged under "energy evolution" lose not only the base of occupational region as the core of life but also a community upon which their whole way of life depends. After being out of employment for a time, they have to reconstruct the disorganized life-space ; they are forced to find a new place of work and then to adjust to a new situation.

To make this process clear we did a follow-up research. We grasp the process of an individual's adjusting behavior as the crossing of his developmental stage and a historical situation, especially industrial change here; because by this approach, we think, the answer to the problem shall be made clear at an adequate level and frame, and then it may be basic for social psychological approach. We consider the locus of crossing of individual developmental stage and historical situation as a socialization process.

Socialization is, we mean, the process of an individual adjusting to a social situation through learning a certain cultural standard and through requiring readiness. To understand the socialization of an individual at least the following

aspects may be important; (1) a social and cultural system, above all, here an industrial system, to which he refers his central ego and on which he makes up his future perspective, (2) the degree of reality-fantasy and directness-indirectness of his contact to the social and cultural system, and the degree of differentiation of the adjustment model, and (3) his capacity and level of adjustment-readiness.

The age of our subjects ranged from twenty to sixty, and most of them are in their thirties and forties. Accordingly the general problem here is on the effects of rapid industrial change upon the socialization of the person in adulthood, the latter period of adolescence and the beginning of senescence. As a drastic case, we shall analyse the process and conditions under which the coal-mine workers who were thrown out of employment reconstruct successfully or fail to reconstruct the disorganized life-space through adjusting to the new situation.

Research method: According to the framework as mentioned above, the following research methods were carried out. The total number of the workers when the mine was closed in 1970 was 1,516.

1. Immediately after the close-down, a questionnaire was delivered from door to door to the 337 workers who resided in one place; the reply rate was 80%.

2. i) One year after the close-down, a questionnaire was sent by mail to 1,305 men whose new addresses were known. ii) About two years after the close-down, the same questionnaire was again sent to the men who had not replied. The result of twice sending by mail is as follows: Of 1,305, i) The number of unreceived questionnaires is 179 (13.7%), ii) accordingly the real number of received questionnaires is 1,126 and the number of men who sent back is 336 (32.5%).

The main items of questionnaire consisted of work record, attitude to the close-down, whether or not they intended to take up another work before the close-down, desired terms about a new place of work, information on the place of work, the kind of the new work, the conditions true to and against expectation, their level of adaptation to the new situation, future perspective and so no.

3. About two years after the close-down, we had an intensive interview with fifty workers who sought jobs at iron factories in Chiba Prefecture and a major coal-mine in Hokkaido.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND SEEKING JOB

Coal-mine communities have a characteristic social coherence. Most of them are not only isolated geographically but also socially self-sufficient and exclusive. The requisites of daily living such as housing, food and clothes are supplied by the company or its services, making it possible for inhabitants to live every day without direct relation with the outside. Houses are crowded together and inhabitants

have similar cultural background and ways of life. The workers have an intense feeling of belonging to the company, on the other hand, they also show great loyalty to the labor union. The workers are organized in various formal systems such as labor management, labor union and the neighborhood association, and they participated in multifarious informal groups. Mutual aid in need has been held more valuable than anything traditionally. In short, on all regions of life, the workers and their family depend deeply upon the community. Thus, the inhabitants are apt to nourish a narrow-minded local patriotism and not to expose themselves to a new stimulus and experience, except recent adolescents.

From the points mentioned above, then, the situation of the close-down not only means the loss of occupation for those who have lived in a coal-mine. But it also means the loss of the community, that is, the foundation of all region of life. This tendency is also marked in case of our subjects. Surroundings of the mine include petty farms and fishing area and the most northern part of rice cultivation. Most of the workers had come into the coal-mine from those places as surplus labor; there is no place to absorb the jobless. Hence, they cannot but reorganize their life through seeking a new place of work away from their native community.

As stated above, the decline of the coal-mining industry and a demand for manual labor in city factories has already extended the frame of life-space of the coal-mine workers. This is suggested by the workers' attitude toward the close-down: To the question, "What did you think about the close-down? Select one among three", 28 per cent of the total number regarded it as "a good chance to change a place of work"; 44 per cent thought "somehow it would come out all right"; and 28 per cent "I was at a loss what to do". The difference by generation is illustrated in Fig. 1. It seems that the younger the worker is the more he regards

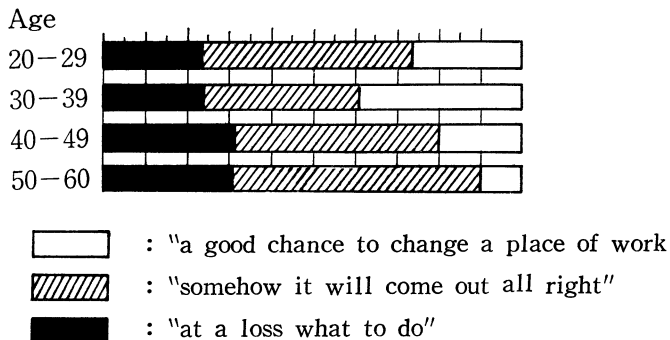


Fig. 1. Attitude toward the close-down—Variance by generation—

the close-down as a good chance to change his place of work. Not only they foresaw it but also their consciousness had extended outer. This fact is ascertained futhermore by the number of persons who intended to change a place of work without

result; 28 per cent of all, especially 56 per cent of those in their twenties, have once intended to change a place of work without result.

Now, actually faced with unemployment the workers by all means can not but seek and choose a new place of work. As desired terms about new place of work, they lay stress on "the future of the company", "wages" and "housing assistance" in almost the same degree, and then "work free from danger". On the other hand, there was a great demand for manual labor at the time of the close-down in 1970, affected by the prosperity of productive industry in cities. To be sure the demand for the labor is great but it is noticeable that the kinds of work for the coal-mine worker are limited because of their narrow and fixed readiness. Moreover the age limit plays an important role, such as forty years or under. The kinds of work prepared for the coal-miners are classified broadly into two large groups: (a) a mine foreman in a major coal-mine, and (b) a manual worker in iron, shipbuilding, machine, automobile and other industries; in addition to these, (c) as work for the old, light work such as an odd-job, an out-of-pit work, a dormitory inspector and so on. Most of the miners are first of all forced to choose either (a) or (b). Arranging in brief the plus and minus valence of the two main kinds of work, according to the responses to the questionnaire, is as follows: (a) As plus valence of a mine foreman in major coal-mine, "accustomed work", "relatively high wages", "housing assistance" and "familiarity with the ways of life".; as minus valence, "uncertainty of the coal-mining industry" and "the danger of the work". (b) On the other hand, as plus valence of the manual worker "certainty of the industries" and "work free from danger compared with the coal-mine"; as minus valence, "unaccustomed work", "lower wages than in the coal-mine" and "unfamiliarity with the ways of life in city far from one's native community".

Final decision on his new place of work, however, does not depend upon only his own valuation of those factors. It does not depend upon only direct negotiation with a collector or with an employment security organization by himself. The movement of the members of informal groups, above all, has a great influence on the attitude of the individual; they had lived interdependently for many years in a coal-mining community surrounded by mountains near the northern end of this country and therefore most of them did not have differentiated knowledge about modernized industries. Consequently, many families migrated into the same place of work together with neighbors, with fellow workers or with relatives.

Generally speaking, the younger he is, the more differentiated knowledge he has about modernized industries and the more he regards the close-down as a good chance for washing his hands as a coal miner. Above all, there is a great demand for a small number of technical school graduated and their technological readiness

such as mechanic and electric makes it easy for them to get a new place of work without conflict. In contrast with the younger men, the miners from thirty five to fifty years old worry themselves about the conflicting valences that (a) a mine foreman and (b) a manual worker have, as mentioned above. Many of them, consequently, moved as a mine-foreman to major coals where they were able to secure an income as before, though anxious about the future of the coal-mining industry.

Case Y. H.

39 years old. born in Saghalien. He entered the coal-mine as a foreman at 20 years of age from a marine process factory. "I intended to move to the place of work where my machine technique could be made the most of two years before the close-down, but could not make up my mind". Facing the close-down, "I thought it a good chance to change my place of work". Desired terms about the new place of work: "about the same amount of wages as before, a job to be able to make the most of my machine technique, and housing assistance". His new job: a foreman of a major coal-mine in Hokkaido Prefecture; "because our children are small and both of us cannot earn a livelihood together, and here food, clothing and shelter are provided. I sought the advice about my new job from my wife and other near relatives, and after all, of my own will, got a job in a coal-mine again because I was used to that kind of work".

It is difficult for the miners of an advanced age over fifty to find a stable employment, and their jobs are limited to light works such as odd-jobber, guard and so on. The Employment Security Office helps the aged find employment by including them among the youngsters. In more difficult case, it happens that they avail themselves of their children's employment.

Case M. T.

58 years old. Work career: a spinner, a farmer, a coal-miner in N. colliery closed down in 1963, and then in the Haboro colliery. Desired terms about new place of work; "the company which employs even the older and others in the family, and a light work". New job: a spinner in a spinning-mill in Aichi Prefecture: "I get a job with my daughter, 16 years old, in the spinning-mill where my son, 20 years old, had worked. For the aged to get a job alone is difficult".

In these cases, the close-down of the mine accelerated their arriving at senescence in the context of socialization.

To which kind of industries did 1,500 odd men from the Haboro colliery move after all? Of a total of 1,093 men whose new places of work were confirmed in a

half year after close-down, 43.3 per cent got a job in a manufacturing industry and 40,5 per cent in a mining industry; that is, 83,8 per cent in all concentrated in these two industries. The rest was construction industry (6,7%), transportation and communication industry(3,3%), wholesale and retail(2,8%), and service(2,8%). Most of the works that they got were, in a word, the last manual work remaining in the industries. Incidentally it may be remarked that no one returned to farming and fishing.

In these processes, we can see the behavior of the individuals who were severely subject to the influence of industrial changes. However, it is noteworthy that the individual's attitude or behavior was not determined directly by the trend of industrial changes. The trends affect him through a filter of the community on which his life-space depends. Above all, the informal groups in the community give him a standard of behavior. (to be continued)

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